

Old Mill Village Museum



New Milford, Pennsylvania

"Where Antiquity Lives"

50th Anniversary Souvenir Book

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The Birth of Old Mill Village

"The endeavor of the people of the Land of the Endless Mountains to preserve their heritage. A living, working museum, conducting the crafts and trades of the past." — Mission statement from OMV souvenir guidebooks, 1970 thru 1986

In 1959, New Milford borough celebrated its Centennial. For the entire summer of that year, the area rode on a wave of community pride and an enthusiasm for history and heritage. After the last of the celebrations ended, the enthusiasm and pride endured. The people of the community realized the need to preserve the heritage of the past was still important.

To address this need, a new organization was founded in 1960. Named the Endless Mountains Historical Society, its founding members were: Julius and Louise Bahmann, Walter Buhr, George Campbell, Donald Deeble, James and Nina Elvey, Millard Hall, Ernest Howe, Joseph Mack, J. Wilson McGuire, Esther Robinson, Robert T. Smith, Edyth Williams, and Gordon Williams. Founded as a private non-profit organization, the Society sold shares to raise funds.

George Campbell owned a tract of land spanning Mylert Creek north of New Milford which once was the site of John Belknap's saw mill, built ca. 1810-1830. On the land was an old dairy barn as well as a lodge built for a horseman's riding club which used the grounds. This land was transferred to the Society for the creation of a museum. Buildings from the region were moved onto the site, some moved intact while others were dismantled and rebuilt. Other buildings were built on the grounds to serve specific needs.

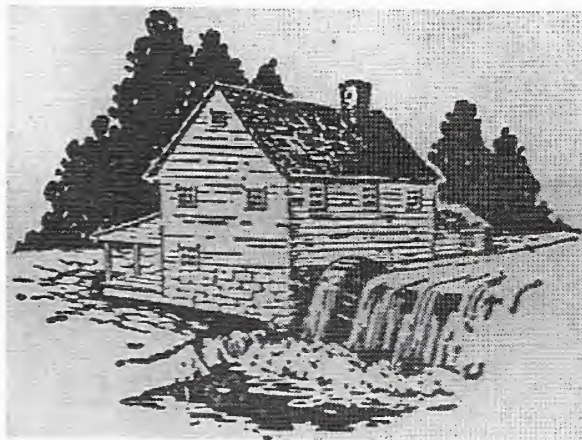
A variety of names was suggested for the museum, including

“Old West Town,” but because of the presence of the sawmill foundations and mill dam on the grounds, Old Mill Village was the choice.

Two years of work on the grounds and buildings followed, and in 1962, the museum had its official opening. The only event of that year was the Endless Mountains Folk Festival, which became an annual tradition for many years to follow.

By 1970, the debt load carried by the Endless Mts. Historical Society threatened the very existence of Old Mill Village. The directors of the society approached the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and entered into a process which would result in PHMC taking over ownership of Old Mill Village. A new non-profit organization was formed, the Associate Members of Old Mill Village, to work in cooperation with PHMC in the maintenance and operation of the museum. The debts of the Endless Mts. Historical Society were paid by PHMC, and the Society was dissolved.

Over the past 50 years, the people of Old Mill Village have worked to preserve our heritage, and keep alive the crafts and trades of the past. With the help of each new generation of members and volunteers, we will make Old Mill Village a place “Where Antiquity Lives.”



Original logo used on OMV souvenir guidebooks

CONGRATULATIONS
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111th District

Visions of the Past



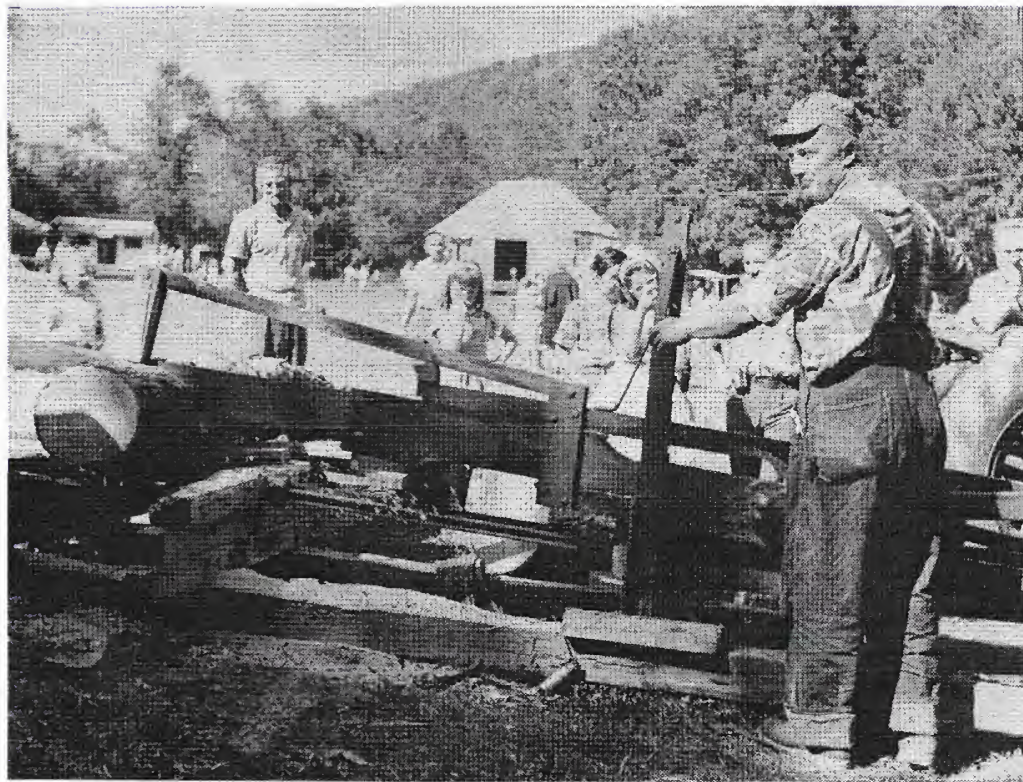
Jay Hill with his teams of oxen (1964).



Prudence Clark in the Grove School (late 1970's).



Millard Hall working at his shingle mill (1964).



Millard Hall working a belt-powered crosscut saw.



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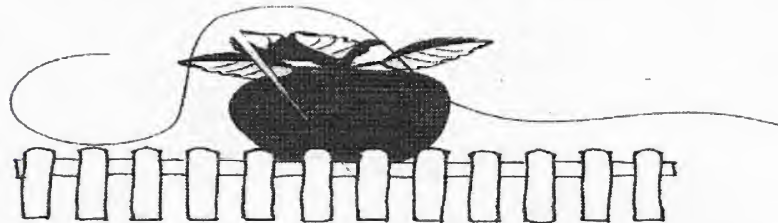
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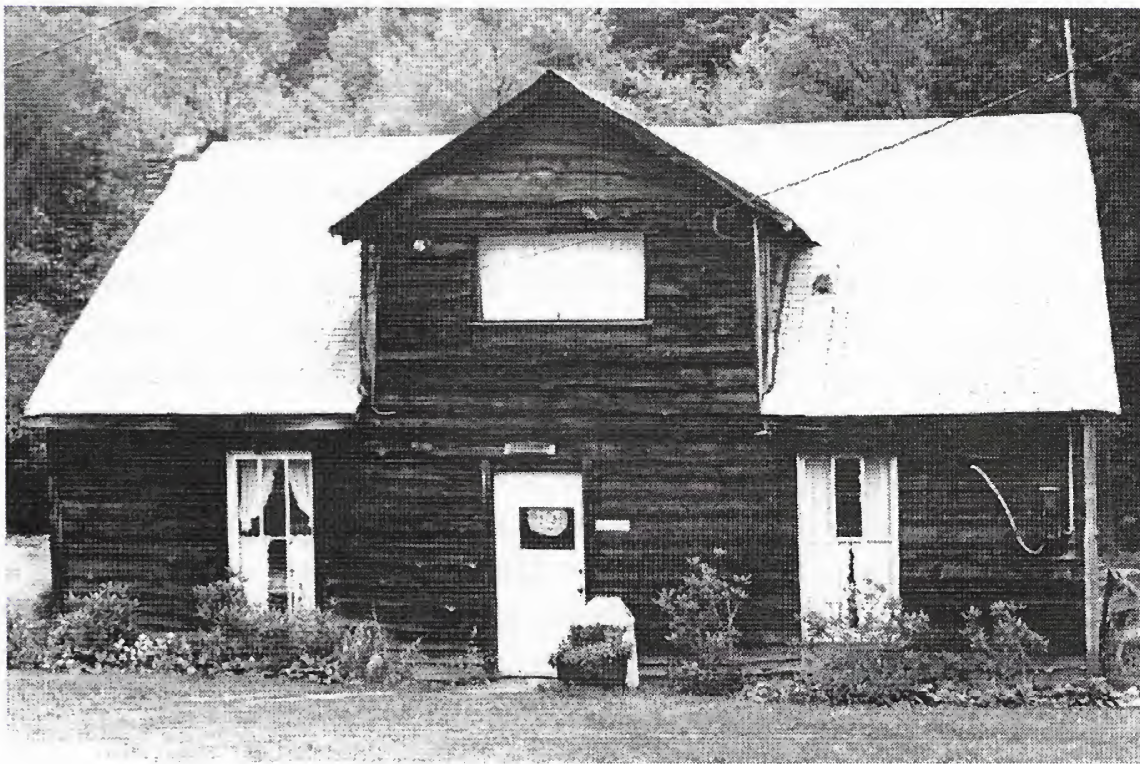
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**Drawstring bags for Addy, the American Girl doll, 1864,
depicted in "Addy's Craft Book"*

Roofs Over Our Heads

Over the last 50 years, many buildings have come to be on the grounds of Old Mill Village. Some of these were buildings of regional interest or significance that were moved here. Some have been built here. Some no longer stand on the grounds. Here we present a glimpse of the buildings that have sheltered us over the years.

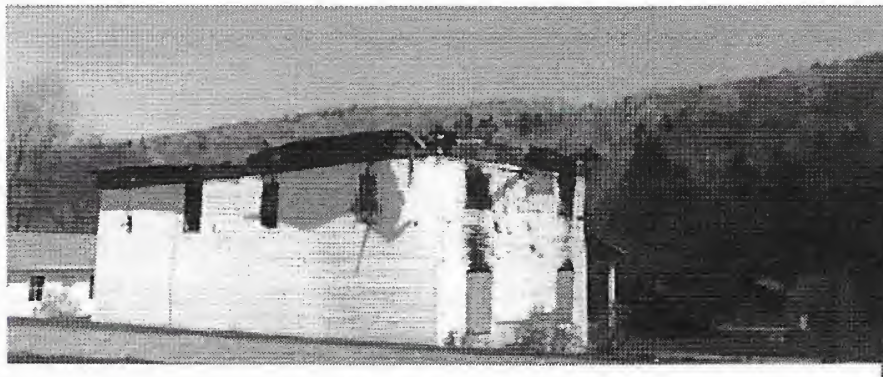


One of the few buildings that was on the grounds when OMV was founded. It was originally used as a club house for the horseman's club that used the grounds. It has been used as the "Village Inn," where dinners were served during events, and most recently as the "Village Mercantile," or gift shop. It is currently closed to the public, following the flooding in 2006, but is slated to be reopened.

Arts and Crafts building



This building was originally the “Hawley” building in New Milford, completed in 1869. It stood at the corner of Main St. (Route 11) and Montrose St. Several owners conducted business in the building, mostly as a general store. The Pump –n– Pantry convenience store is at that location now. This building was disassembled and rebuilt at Old Mill Village. For over 15 years this served as the focal point of the Village, housing a great number of artifacts and serving as space for craft demonstrations. In the winter of 1979, the building destroyed by a devastating fire. A few of the artifacts were saved, but the building was beyond repair. It was demolished and PA Historical and Museum Commission had a new building put on its spot. The new building now serves as our Visitors’ Center and museum Gallery, and houses our snack shop, the Wooden Spoon.



After the fire.

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Harness Shop



This was built on the grounds using materials from older buildings. Located on the lower green, it housed leather and harness making equipment and supplies.

The harness shop fell into disrepair, and was damaged beyond repair by the flood of 2006. It was demolished and removed, but many of the artifacts it housed were saved and are now in storage.

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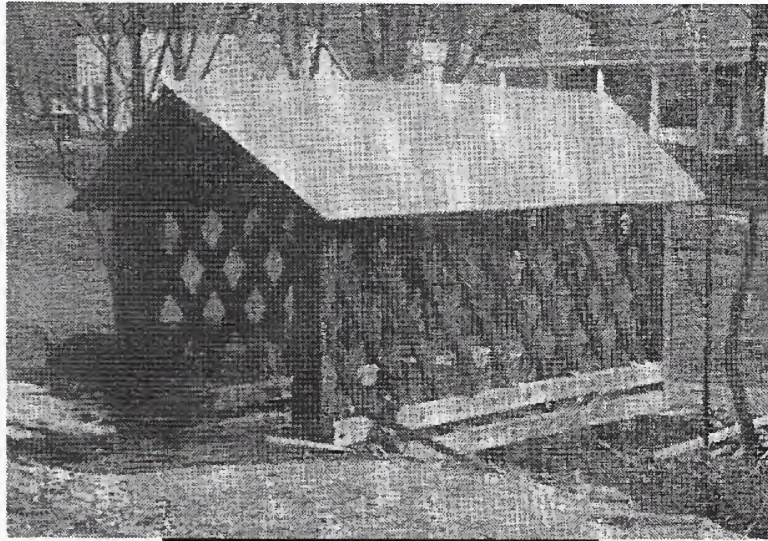


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L. C. Bevan Covered Bridge



Nearly complete in 1965

Of all the buildings at OMV, the L. C. Bevan Covered bridge has traveled the farthest and had the fullest history. Originally built in 1850 as the North Cannonsville bridge in Delaware County New York, it served over 100 years in its original location. In the 1950's it was moved intact to a nearby field and replaced by a modern bridge. Not long after, it was purchased by the Sidney, (NY) Historical Society and moved to a new locale. (The original area where the bridge once stood is now under water, covered by the Cannonsville Reservoir)

At the Sidney location, the bridge was to serve as centerpiece of a museum village. Funding for that project fell through, and never happened. During this time, vandals set fire to the bridge, and one third was destroyed.

By this time, Old Mill Village had been founded, and the bridge was offered to OMV. The undamaged parts were dismantled, and moved to the Village. Through 1965, work was done to rebuild the bridge over Mylert Creek.

Cont. next page.



In September of 1965, the bridge was rededicated to great fanfare. Since then, it has served as a centerpiece of the Village. It was recognized as the only authentic covered bridge in Susquehanna County by the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society, the authority for covered bridges in Pennsylvania.

Misfortune struck the bridge in the form of a series of floods. 1993 saw heavy rains that raised the level of Mylert Creek to the bridge deck, but caused no significant damage.

In 2004 rains dropped by Tropical Storm Ivan rose the creek to wash away some of the crossbeams under the bridge, and it had to be closed to public use.

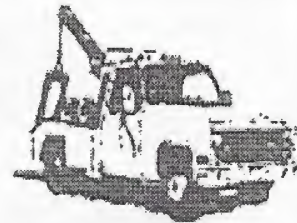
Then came June 2006. Three days of heavy rain caused the creek to flood as it has never done in living memory. The power of the water was too much for the bridge to withstand. It was pushed off its abutments and washed sideways downstream. Hitting a tree turned it 90 degrees and it continued downstream, until another tree stopped it, water flowing through the span.

There it stayed for six months, until it was extracted using a 50-ton forklift and a backhoe. It was placed on concrete blocks next to the creek, where it remains today.

Now the fate of this structure remains in limbo. The fact that it still stands is a testament to the skill of those who built and rebuilt it, and proof that it deserves to continue its useful life. However, in order for its restoration to happen, funds are needed. A dedicated account has been established to raise the money needed for restoration, but we are still far from the needed amount.

“Roofs Over Our Heads” continues on page 26

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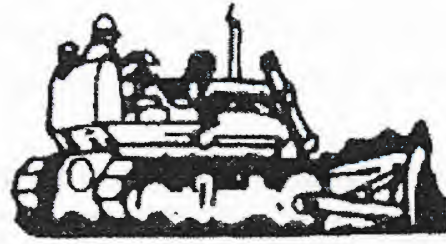
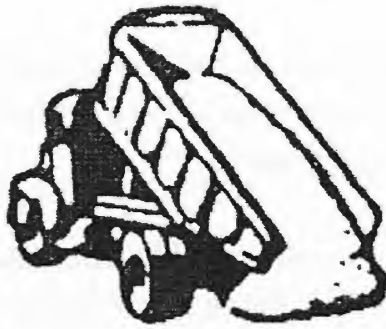


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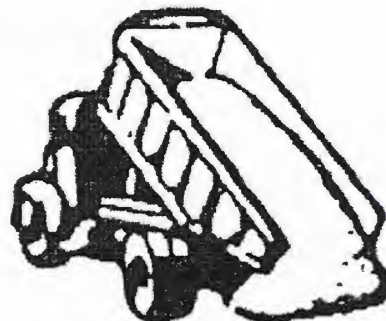
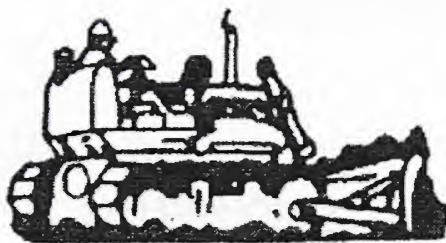
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Why An “Old Mill Village?”

Old Mill Village [opened] in 1962, the vision of Mr. George Campbell, previous owner of the grounds. He envisioned an area dedicated to the education and continuation of the heritage and history of [the Endless Mountains]. With the remnants of the old Belknap Mill situated along the stream, the site seemed appropriate; in fact, quite perfect — an historic site, a visionary landowner.

As this area has been agriculturally bent throughout its existence, the heritage early on was toward this end, exemplified in the activities and implements used to exist in the “howling wilderness.” Activities of both men and women dedicated to the survival of their families were depicted by village volunteers — from use of oxen to spinning of wool, from the use of tools to making of shoes, from use of plants to weaving of baskets. Everything necessary to a family’s existence had to be produced by hand or hauled overland at greater expense than most could afford. With industrialization and improved times during the second half of the nineteenth century, less was necessarily fashioned on the homestead or in the nearest community. Thus began the demise of the many subsistence activities we now refer to as “crafts,” and which Mr. Campbell felt needed preserving.

Even in settlement days, however, all was not “all work and no play.” Education ranged from a few days in school each year to being educated at Yale. But all agreed that education was vital. Schools were erected before churches, becoming the center of each small community. And so these factors were also included in Mr. Campbell’s vision for this “Old Mill Village.”

Nothing much visionary can be accomplished in a matter of one or two years, nor can such be undertaken completely alone. But the word spread and visitors began coming.

(continued on page 22)

BE A PART OF OLD MILL VILLAGE ~
BECOME A
MEMBER TODAY!

The Associate Members of Old Mill Village is the successor group to the Endless Mountains Historical Society, entrusted with the maintenance and operation of the Village. Membership term is Jan. - Dec. of each year. (Memberships paid after Sept. 1 are valid through the following year.) Members receive free admission to all events, voting privileges, and the quarterly newsletter. Please copy and/or use the form below. Thank you!

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(continued from page 20)

At first the Village was open only a few weekends each season, incorporating many people who enjoyed doing “old time crafts,” many of which were nearly forgotten. Buildings were acquired by personal acquisition, donation, or construction. Artifacts were acquired in like manner.

Gradually, it became clear that management by a [small group] was no longer feasible and the [Associate Members of Old Mill Village was formed to take over from the Endless Mts. Historical Society]. Birth of a new institution is not always easy, nor does it make for a smooth transition of leadership. Old Mill Village Museum has, consequently, suffered its growing pains from time to time, but has outlived its several stages of development — the newness of becoming, the vagaries of exploration, the romance of creativity, the uncertainty of neglect, the influx of ideas— and has survived for the betterment of us all.

The amazing truth of this tale is that this has been accomplished, with few exceptions, by unpaid VOLUNTEERS....

-dedicated to the portrayal of times gone by
-willing to share forgotten skills
-enraptured with the peace of a rural area
-caring enough to give time and effort to a greater good.

We, the volunteers at Old Mill Village Museum, welcome you to our community, trusting that you, too, will find your niche and be able to expand the knowledge and influence of [the Endless Mountains’] heritage and history.

Written by Cindy Wooden (2004)



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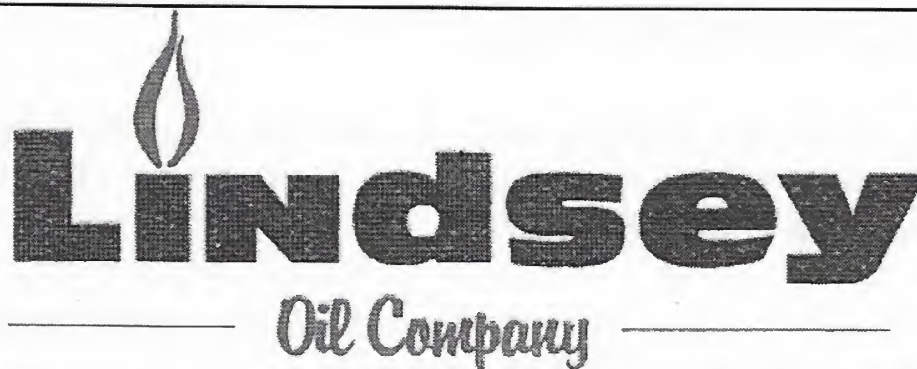
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Grove School



This excellent example of a one-room school house was built in 1858 in New Milford township. Also referred to as the "Shay School," due to its location on Shay Hill. It served as a school until 1931, when schools were consolidated. The building was used by the community for several years, but was eventually abandoned. It sat on its original location until the early 1970's, when it was donated to Old Mill Village.

In 1974, the building was moved intact to the OMV grounds, where restoration work was done. It was dedicated in the fall of 1974.

The desks, organ, and potbellied stove are original to the school as it was when it was closed.

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“Hammond House”



This was originally part of a home in Harford Township. It was dismantled, brought to OMV and reassembled in 1964. It has been used in many ways over the years: rest rooms, ticket booth and snack shop. The interior was damaged by water in the flood of 2006, and awaits renovation.

Candle Shop



Originally a cabinet shop in Rush, PA this building was also used as a barber shop. It was moved intact to OMV, where it was used as the museum office, then became the shop for demonstrating candlemaking.

Post Office



This building was built on the corner of Main and Ward Streets in New Milford in the 1889, and was called the "Shelp building" after its builder, Charles Shelp. Jesse Vailes was the first postmaster in this office. It was used as the Post Office until 1957, when operations were moved to the current Post Office. It was used by the First Baptist Church for Sunday school for several years. The church donated the building to Old Mill Village, and it was moved to the Village grounds in 1978.

The space in the back of the building was added by Shelp to use as his personal office, where he conducted his business as a cattle dealer and real estate agent. That space is now used as our Dress Shop.

Dairy Barn

Another of the buildings on the grounds in 1960, this former dairy barn is used for storage, and houses a display of farming tools and implements. It also has housed the blacksmith shop since the flood of 2006.

Cobbler Shop



Built in 1892 by James Hutchins, New Milford's first shoemaker. In 1897 it was purchased by Edwin (Ted) Adams, who had worked for Hutchins, and moved to a new location on Main Street. Adams died in late 1900, and in January 1901 the building was rented to Frank Dale, a shoemaker from Binghamton, NY.

Dale operated the store until he fell and broke his hip in the fall of 1958. He sold his stock soon after. The cobbler shop was moved to Old Mill Village in 1962. It has been a showcase of the cobbler's art and the tools of the trade, including a large collection of shoes and artifacts.

The building is currently being used by the Village Mercantile, our gift shop.

Barber Shop

In 1910, Billy Cooper, the night telegraph operator at the railroad station, had a photography studio built at Union and Church streets in New Milford. It had a large skylight to allow maximum light needed for the slow film of the time.

Cooper sold the building to Hugh Stone, who had it moved to Main Street, and conducted a barber shop there until about 1920. Stone then sold it to Frank Dale, who moved it to the back of his shoe store, where he used it for storage.

Moved for the third time to Old Mill Village in 1962, it has been restored to very close to its arrangement as a barber shop circa 1920. Have a look at this building, which is 100 years old this year.



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The Crafts

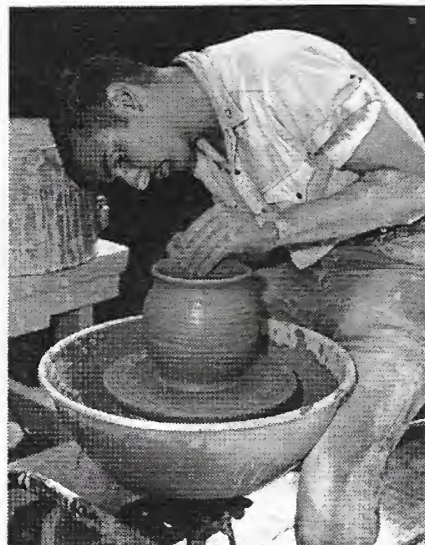
Over the years Old Mill Village has been a showcase for demonstrators who keep alive crafts from the days of our ancestors. Many volunteers have generously donated their time and talents to make Old Mill Village a living, working museum. Here are a few photos of crafters past and present.



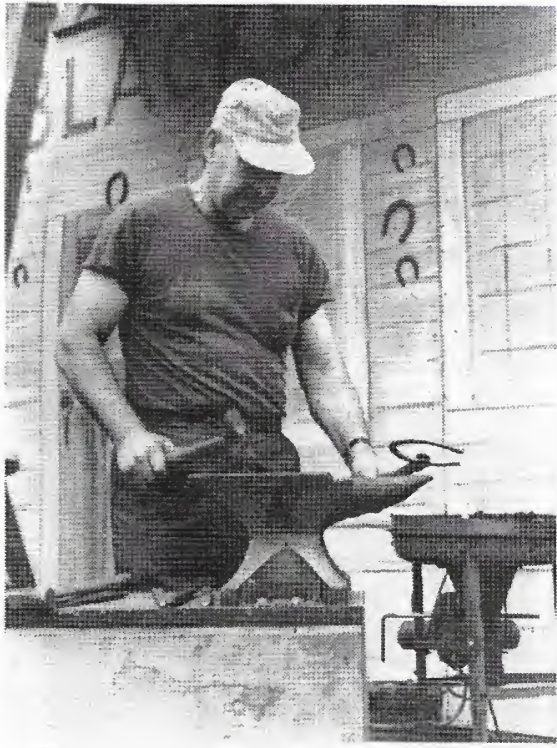
Soapmakers



Candlemaker



Potter



Blacksmiths, past and present



Flax Spinner





Ben Stone - Musician,
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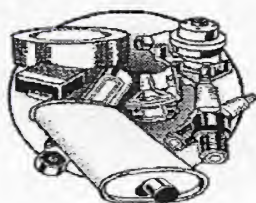
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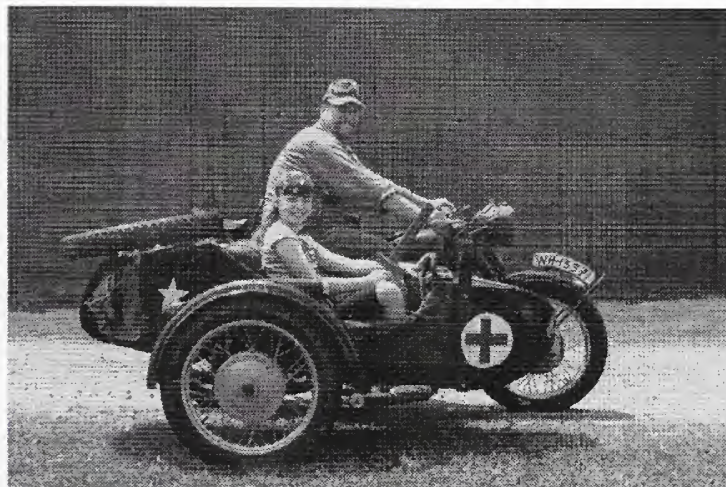
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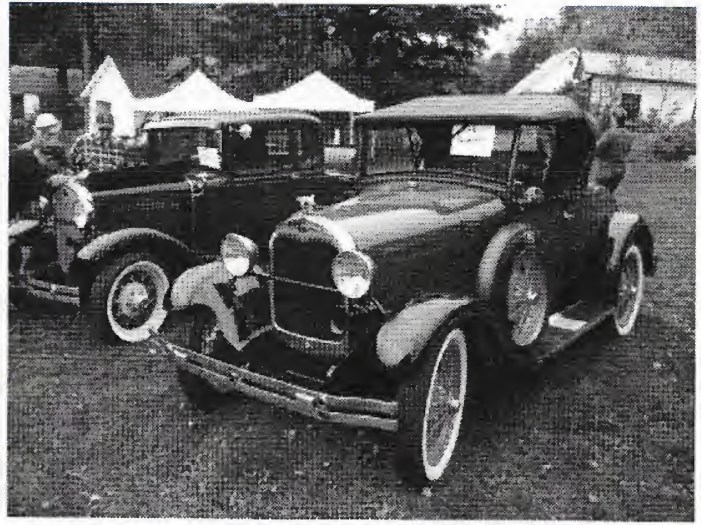
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THE WOODEN SPOON

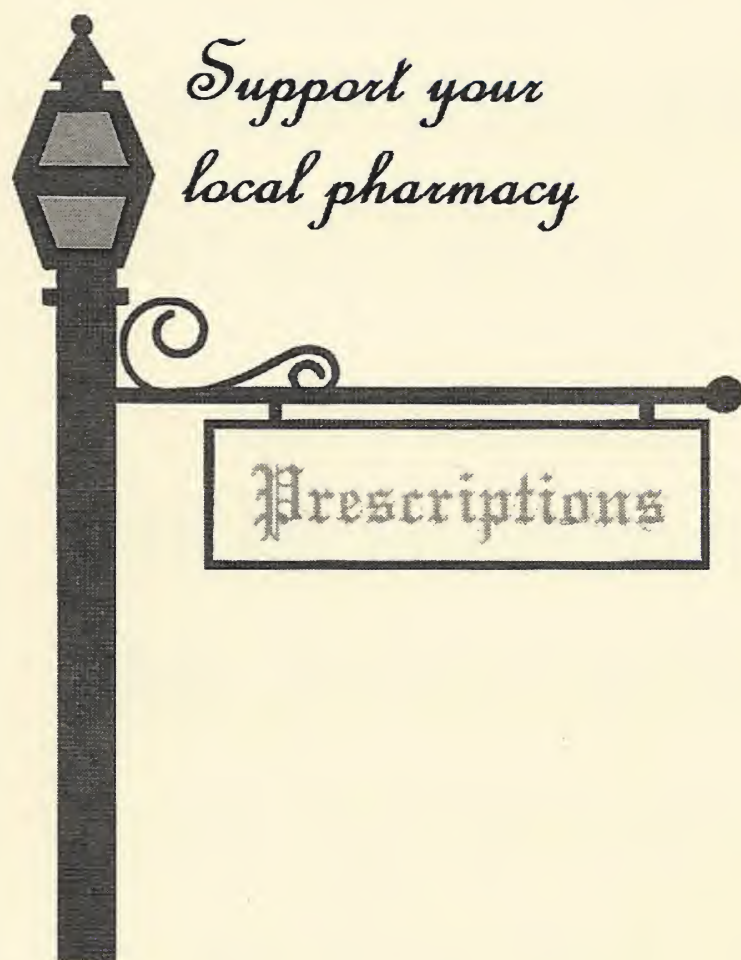
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